

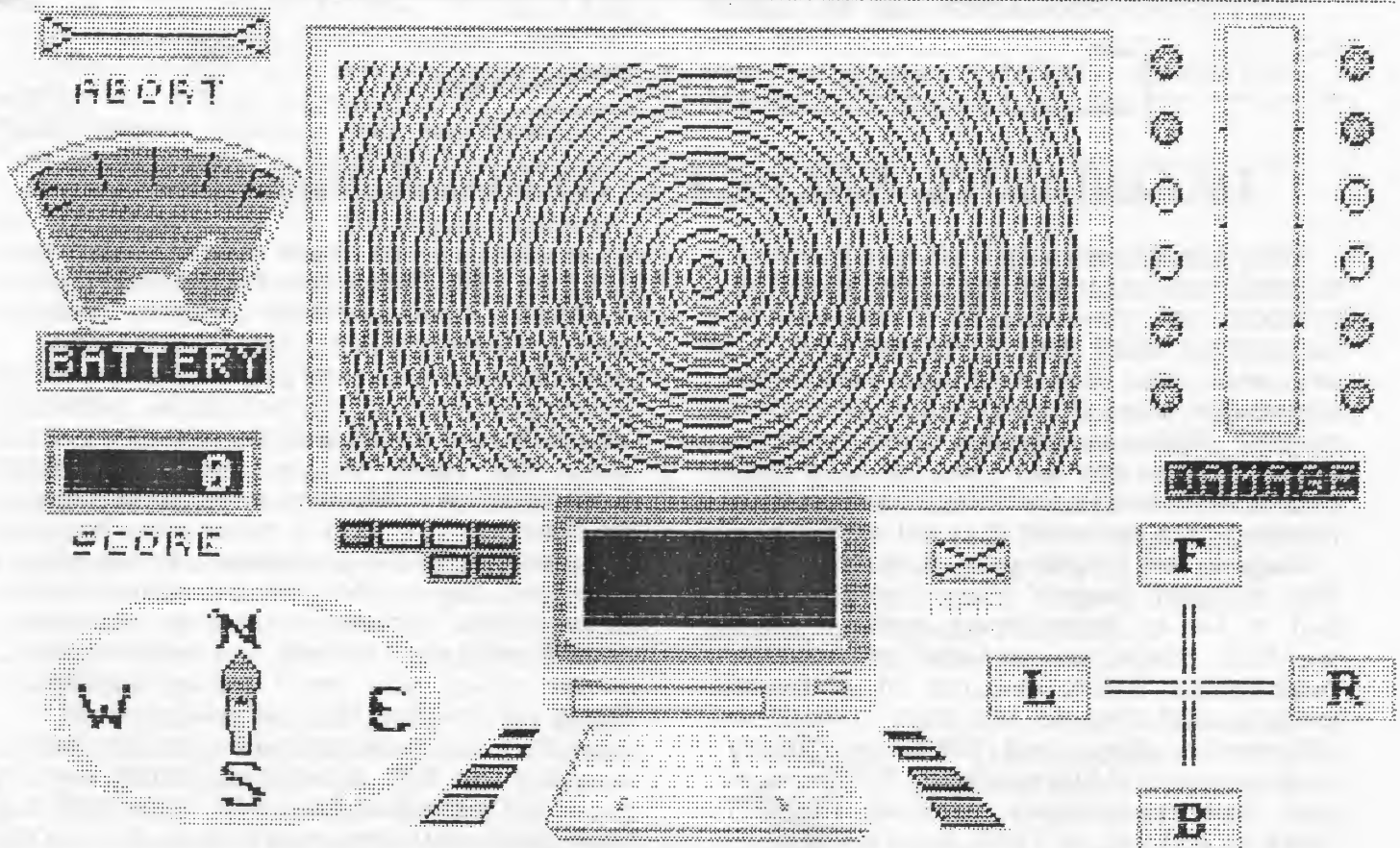
TWIN CITIES ATARI INTEREST GROUP

Next meeting : January 31st

Table of Contents

Presidents Notes	Page 2	VP Announcements	Page 3
Expander OS Review	Page 3	Video Game Report	Page 6
Triple Pack Review	Page 6	SysOp Speaks	Page 7
Membership Notes	Page 8	Fleet Street Review	Page 8
Editors ramblings	Page 11	XE Game System	Page 11
OSS Pascal Review	Page 14	The Editors	Page 15

T U N N E L V I S I O N



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Chairman	Nathan Block	922-8012
SysOp	Ken Modeen	
BBS	Express!	425-2533
Newsletter		
Editors	Cory Johnson/Tom Green	

Membership renewal : You may renew your membership at any TAIG meeting, or send a check for 15.00 (made out to TAIG), and the completed membership form (found on the inside back page of this newsletter) to Nathan Block
2656 Georgia Avenue South
St. Louis Park, Mn.
55426

Newsletter exchange and article submission :

If you represent another Atari users group that wishes to exchange newsletters, please mail a copy of your newsletter to TAIG. Articles should be submitted in standard text files, such as Atariwriter, Hometext, SpeedScript etc. If using an ST please turn off Word Processor mode before saving, i.e. save as a standard ASCII file. You can send the article to TAIG, drop it off at a meeting, or upload it to the BBS. Any storage media will be returned at the next meeting or mailed to you.

The Editors

The TAIG Newsletter

President's Notes By Steven Ingalsbe

I hope that everybody had an enjoyable holiday season, I sure did. Now that the holidays are over, and the temp outside has dipped to 20 degrees below zero, we are well into the computer season in Minnesota. And do you know what that means? Right, our annual January Open House. This is the best time for all of you people who aren't members, to come to a meeting and see what it is all about.

Quite a few people pick up our newsletters at local dealers' places of business, but a lot of them never make it to a meeting. Come on out and see what is happening. There are lot of different people, and they all use their computers differently. Tips and ideas are freely exchanged at TAIG meetings. For those of you that are already members, I don't have to sell you on TAIG, but I would still like to see you at the January meeting

which will be held Jan 31 at 7:00pm at the St. Louis Park Recreation Center. We plan to have Demos, Public Domain disks forsale, Blank disks for sale, and a raffle. Last month we raffled off 3 8-bit packages, and 2 ST packages, which helped the club raise some cash.

As some of you have already discovered, our Modem decided to take the holidays off, and it never came back. It no longer dials or answers, so we will have to have that looked into. Ken Modeen has agreed to let us use his modem until ours is fixed, but there maybe periods when you can't get on the BBS. Those will be the times when Ken needs a quick telecommunications fix, and he will be using the BBS line (its only fair).

That's all that I have for this month. I hope that you can make it to the next meeting.

Vice Presidential Type Announcements By Tom Green

The first item I am going to discuss is the state of the newsletter talks between TAIG and SPACE/MAST. The officers of SPACE/MAST got together and drew up a contract. After reading item 1 of the Background of the contract, I knew this wasn't going to work too well. Item 1 states, TAIG wishes to participate in the SPACE/MAST newsletter. When we approached SPACE/MAST we stated we wanted to join together, merge, etc. and put out a combined newsletter, not become a part of THEIR newsletter.

We thought if we got together on this we could save both clubs some money by sharing printing costs and postage. This is still the case, but I don't feel that our club should be put under the constraints that are set forth in SPACE/MAST's current contract just to save a little money. At this time we will continue to publish our own newsletter and will continue the discussions with SPACE/MAST to see if a reasonable compromise can be reached.

This month's meeting should be a fun one. It is time again for the annual TAIG Open House. A TAIG member will be bringing his Amateur radio equipment and will be doing some demonstrations of Packet Radio (BBSing over the airwaves). Refreshments and snacks will be available. For NEW members the membership fee will be \$10, this is \$5 off the regular membership fee. We will have some software to raffle and we will try to have a MEGA at the meeting for those who haven't seen one yet.

Other things...Kudos to Cory for the time he spent promoting this month's meeting, including writing letters to computer software and hardware dealers in the Twin Cities area, local music stores that carry computer(MIDI) equipment, libraries and schools.

Hopefully the newsletter is out on time, I will now be helping Cory produce the newsletter, and we are kind of starting from scratch here on the ST, using software unfamiliar to me.

Next month we are going to try (once again) to have a representative from Roger Dodger music come in to give us a demo on the MIDI capabilities of the ST, and MIDI in general. Hopefully now that the representative owns an ST himself, it will be

easier to get him to stop by.

Lets see what else...the TAIG membership database is now kept on both 8-bit and 16-bit computers. This was done to help provide backups and to prevent any big problems if a future membership chairman has an ST. It also makes it easier for Cory, Nathan and I when we print the newsletter labels, I don't have to take the time to switch the printer over to the 8-bit system and try to get the label data into Synfile+ correctly.

I guess that is about it from me for this month, hope to see you all at the open house, Sunday January 31.

5.25" Disks For Sale

TAIG will be selling 5.25" disks at the next meeting. The disks are generic and will cost 40 cents a piece and are sold only in lots of 10. Labels and sleeves are included in this price. Buying the disks from the group helps keep the club going. So if you are in need of disks please purchase some at the next meeting.

Review of the EXPANDER OPERATING SYSTEM

Manufactured by SYNERGY CONCEPTS
Reviewed by Steven Ingalsbe

This review can be copied as long as TAIG and Steven Ingalsbe are given credit.

The Expander Operating System (OS) is a replacement for the OS in the 800XL and 130XE. It is basically the Rev. B OS from the "old 800" with some portions rewritten. Synergy Concepts has licensed the Atari OS from Atari, modified it, and are selling it as a replacement OS. Why would you want to use this OS? Its big advantage is that it has been modified to use the 256K or 512K RAM upgrades that are floating around for the XL/XE computer. It's options are 2 single, 2 double, 1 double, or 1 single RAMdisk.

Continued on next page



The TAIG BBS
300/1200 Bps 24 Hours
at 425-2533

Some of these options allow you to have RAMdisks in the 2nd 256K bank, while leaving the 1st bank free for normal 130XE bank switching.

The Expander OS also has a built-in mini-DOS (called E-DOS), True cold-start from the keyboard, and it allows you to set-up a RAMdrive, and then switch that drive so that it is now drive #1. This allows you to "boot" off of the RAMdrive. I think that that is its best feature.

Here is a small list of Advantages and Disadvantages (in my opinion):

Advantages:

- 1) Works with most DOS's.
- 2) Do a true cold-start without cycling the power switch.
- 3) Allows you to use some older software that needs the translator on the XL/XE OS.
- 4) Make your RAMdrive into drive 1 and boot it.
- 5) Built in E-DOS allows you to Format disks and to duplicate disks.

Disadvantages:

- 1) Won't work with SpartaDOS 2.3 (it does seem to work with Ver 3.2d).
- 2) The RAMdrives are pre-configured (drives 2 MPLS on a 256XL/320XE).
- 3) Screen colors are reversed (Black screen with Blue border).
- 4) Self-test routines are missing.
- 5) the "XL vectors" are missing at \$E480, \$E483, \$E486, \$E489, and \$E48C
- 6) "old 800" key toggle
- 7) The Expander OS uses part of the "STACK" for its own use.
- 8) I have several programs that will not work correctly with the Expander OS. These are Public Domain programs, but the OS was re-written enough to keep these from working.

A couple of these require a little more explanation. First, the Screen color and keyboard toggle are simply personal preference. I got used to the XE way and prefer it.

The "preconfiguration" I don't like because it sets up the RAMdrives as drives 2 and 3 on my system (320XE) and I have a second drive already. This forces me to either turn it off, or to change it to drive 4. I would have liked to see the drives set up as 3 and 4. Even better would be a way to configure it the way you want, but that is impractical.

[Actually, there is a way to configure the RAMdrives into any number drive that you want. Memory locations \$144 through \$147 contain the number of the RAMdrives. You could change these to whatever you want, which allow you to use the RAMdrives as drives 7 and 8 on a 320XE. However, if you press RESET, then the original numbers will be stuffed back into these locations. This is a "quick n dirty" fix, but one that works.]

The missing self-test code is no big loss. As most people with a XE know, the self test is left over from the 1200XL, and doesn't even check the extra 64K of RAM in a stock 130XE. I still find it useful, however, for checking the voice channels, keyboard, and "main" 48K of RAM. I would have liked to see a built-in RAM tester for the 256K and 512K of extra RAM.

As for the missing "XL Vectors", as far as I know, nobody has written a program that requires these vectors, but you will have some problems if they do.

The thing that I found the most objectionable, was the use of the "stack" (memory addresses \$100 to \$1FF (also called "Page one")). The 6502 microprocessor uses the stack to store return addresses from subroutines and interrupts. The Expander OS uses \$144 through \$14C for its own use. This is in the middle of the stack! The programmer is assuming that you will never have an application program that goes to this level. So far, I have not had any problems with the stack, but I would prefer that this area be left alone. There are quite a few "old" programs out there that use the stack for their own use.

The built-in E-DOS has very limited functions. It allows you to format a disk (physical or RAM), or copy a whole disk. These are its only two functions. The format command works fine, and it is one of my favorite functions of this OS. The copy whole disk command I find worthless. It is the slowest disk copy program that I have ever used, and I find myself using DOS to go faster. Also, the E-DOS will NOT write double density (to RAMdrives or physical drives), it only supports single (it will however read double density disks). So, if you setup 1 double density drive in RAM, you cannot then use E-DOS to fill the disk. You would have to go back to DOS and do it from there.

E-DOS uses the cassette buffer for its temporary data

storage. It also uses page 6 (\$600 through \$6FF) for it's menu. If you were running a program that uses these areas when you went into the Executive program, then that program would not work unless it was reloaded.

[As a side note, if you are in Basic and you want to use E-DOS, type X=USR(51785).] The Manual that comes with The Expander Operating System is quite small, but it full of a lot of information. It has a lot of technical information and, in fact, tells you about all of the areas of memory that are used (like the stack and cassette buffer). The manual is 3 sheets of 8 1/2" by 11" paper, folded in half to make a booklet. There is no index or table of contents, but you should have no trouble finding the information that you need. You also get a commands reference card which is a lot easier that flipping through the manual.

The installation directions are 1 page long, and contains 3 steps. It also suggests that if you need help, then you should contact your local users group. Most people should be able to handle the installation. In most 800XL's the OS is socketed, so you just pop out one chip and put the new one. In the 130XE you are going to have to unsolder the OS chip and install the new one. As long as you have to unsolder the OS, put in a socket! The Atari computer board will not handle multiple soldering and unsoldering.

When I first installed the OS into my system and booted the system, it wouldn't work. I was bummed out. It was the easiest upgrade that I had ever done, and yet it didn't want to work. Just to cover all bases before ripping the computer apart, I tried another disk. It booted just fine. The first disk was in SpartaDOS (Ver 2.3) format and the second was Atari (Ver 2.0). Now I was getting worried! If it didn't work with SpartaDOS, then I didn't want anything to do with it. I have since figured out that SpartaDOS 2.3 doesn't work with this OS, but 3.2d seems to work in most areas, but you cannot use the OS RAMdrives with SpartaDOS. They just won't work.

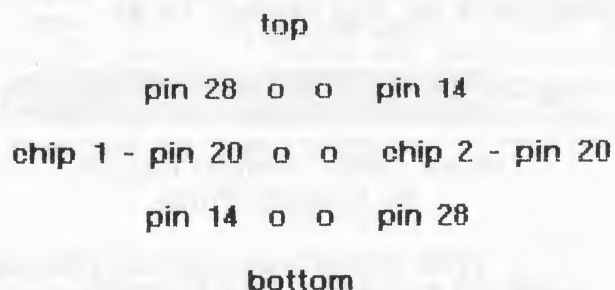
As far as 800 compatibility goes, I have a lot of software that won't work with this OS, and I end up needing the Translator anyway. I found this quite disappointing. I thought that I would be able to throw

away the Translator disk when I bought this OS, and I find out that I still need it for certain programs. To be honest though, most 800 software does work with this system.

Now we get down to the bottom line. Do I think that the Expander OS is worth \$50? No, I do not. You are taking the fine XE os out, and putting a slightly modified 800 OS in. In my opinion, the disadvantages far out way the advantages. Does this mean that I am sorry that I bought it? No. I use it once in a while. I can hear you asking, "once in a while? How is that possible? You have to remove the Atari OS and install this one. This means you must use it all of the time!"

This is true, if you install it according to the manufactures directions. I am now going to tell you how I installed mine. After I had discovered that SpartaDOS didn't work correctly, I knew that I didn't want this OS to be my primary OS. The replacement OS was burned on a 27128 EPROM, which is pin for pin replaceable with the ROM that ATARI uses. The 27128 is a 28 pin, 16K x 8 EPROM, which means that you have 16K of memory and 8 data lines (that is why they are called 8-bit machines).

So I took a 28 pin low profile socket, and soldered it directly to the Atari OS chip, all except pin 20. Pin 20 is the Chip Enable pin, and it's active low (when pin 20 is at ground potential this chip is "on", and when it has +5 volts on it it is "off"). So I bent pin 20 (of the socket) out so it was not touching pin 20 of the Atari OS chip. Then I bent pin 20 of the Atari OS chip out, so it wouldn't make contact with the 130XE motherboard when plugged in (to the socket that I installed on the motherboard). Next, I soldered 1 wire to each pin 20, these were routed to a switch that I installed on the back of the computer. Here is the wiring diagram:



Continued on next Page

You are looking at the rear of a Double Pole Double Throw (DPDT) switch. Don't use one with a center off position, or you will have a position where NO OS is connected! Connect the top left post to the bottom right post. Then connect the bottom right post to pin 28 of the socket you installed (this line has +5 volts on it always). Next connect the top right post to the bottom left post. Now connect the bottom left to pin 14 of the socket (this line has ground on it at all times). Connect pin 20 of the lower chip to the left center post. Connect pin 20 of the upper chip to the right center post.

That is all there is to it. What you have done is made it so YOU control which OS will be enabled during power up. You CANNOT change OS's with the machine on (you won't hurt anything, but the system will hose up). One chip will have +5 Volts on pin 20 while the other one will have 0 volts on it. When you toggle the switch, the conditions change; this way you only have 1 OS at a time on.

I would suggest that if you are interested in the Expander OS, that you arrange to see it work before you buy it. Run all of your favorite software on it, and then decide if you want to install it into your system. It can be nice to use, as long as you are aware of its pitfalls, and you know what you are getting into. I would also suggest that you use the toggle switch setup. That way you can always switch back to the Standard OS when you need to.



Written Anything Lately?

The newsletter editors are always on the look out for articles. If you have purchased a new program lately and would like to share your thoughts on it, please write a review. We will accept articles about almost anything, write something up and send it to us.

The Editors



Video Game Contest Report By Nathan Block

Well Bandits proved an interesting game for December. Lots of people tried but only one emerged triumphant so let's

give a BIG hand for:

GREG GIBBONS 11,150 !!

Congratulations Greg and hopefully you will get your prize at the meeting. I have here another high score for you, Mike Bolen scored 460,900 on Wingman. If you have a high score please send it in! Bye.

January's Video Game is:

ATLANTIS!

Triple Play Pack
By Nathan Block

Forgotten Classics?

I recently picked up the Triple Pack by Access software with Beach-Head, Beach-Head 2, and Raid over Moscow. I was very pleased! Ever since this came out, I didn't

Continued on next page

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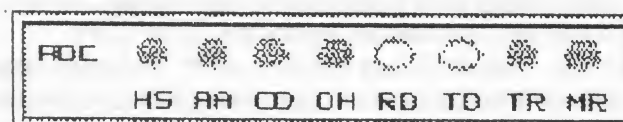
P.O. BOX 18346 / Fort Worth, Texas 76118

VISA

hear as much hype about it as I thought there would be. So, when the prices began dropping I bought mine at Children's Palace for \$17.99.

The graphics on all three games are so/so. Having played two of them on Commodore, that is the comparison that I am making. Beach-Head is very close but the others lack the smoothness of the Commodores. Beach-Head 2 is the very best two-player game that I have seen!

I will avoid going into detail on the games because of the fact they have all been around for quite sometime. I would definitely advise picking this up however which is the reason I am writing this! You won't be disappointed.



The BBS Report By Ken Modeen

The BBS is now run at my house in Maple Grove. We have had it there since sometime in August. The system is run on a 320XE (which was upgraded by Steve Ingalsbe), two 810 disk drives, an eighty-five interface, an avatex 1200hc modem, an eight twenty printer, a TV, and most importantly, Spartados which makes the most efficient use of the system. The spartados is a welcome donation from Richard Mier, one of our members.

The BBS gets adequate use. I'd say 60 calls a week is a good estimation. We have 72 users and a couple of visitors a day.

The BBS is the means by which members communicate between monthly meetings. Communication is either open to all users on the General message base, open to members only on the T.A.I.G. members message base, or private via the E-Mail base. A lot of information is passed in the course of a week. Some of our members live outside the metro area and are not able to make many meetings. For these individuals, the BBS is a real necessary link for gathering and sharing information in the forms of programs, news and just conversation pertaining to Atari Computers. Non-T.A.I.G. members also make use of the T.A.I.G. BBS. Their access, however, is limited to the General message

base and E-mail. Members also have an opportunity to contribute to the BBS. Other than leaving messages, there is a Screenmaker Program available on the BBS for download which is used to create the control character graphics screens that users first see when logging on. In the last month, I have received 4 screens from three members; maybe some of you users have seen these Christmas screens from December.

Besides handing newsletter articles to the newsletter editor at a meeting, the BBS is the easiest way to get newsletter articles to the press. And it gives you upload credits besides. You also get upload credits for the previously mentioned screens.

Ratios are often discussed. How many downloads should be given before requiring an upload. Some say 1 to 5 is alright, some say it's too strict. If we had more participation by the General membership, then I would say it's too strict. But we have little participation by the General membership. Therefore, some prodding needs to be done. Give members a nudge so to speak to sit down and write a review, make a screen, or just dig out a program to share. If we had all the articles we could use and all the new programs out there to fill the D.O.M.'s, then we wouldn't even need a ratio at all.

The BBS is an excellent means by which Atari users find out that there is such a thing as an Atari user group. It's amazing how much interest is peaked, about T.A.I.G., when I leave a message in E-mail to a new user outlining T.A.I.G. Which reminds me, dropping a word about T.A.I.G. to someone browsing next to you at an Atari dealer or Children's Palace could well produce the same results.

If you have an Atari computer and a telephone line to your home, your missing a lot by not telecommunicating. It's not expensive either, I've seen used 1030 modems and XM301 modems around for 25-30 dollars. These are direct connect modems, all you need is the computer, a drive and a screen with either of them. Pick one up, have a ball!

>>>KEN<<<

Next Meeting is January 31st

Notes From The Membership Chairman By Nathan Block

Well, I hope everyone has recovered from all the Christmas goings on! So into business we go. Because of the Christmas season and all the things happening, I will grant the following one more month to make up their dues from December:

Steven Bergerson
Fred Evermon
Dan Farmer
Craig Ritchie
Ralph Rye
Jan Stromberg
Donald Sward
George Toops

I have to get on with business so after this month the preceding will be deleted. The following are up for January

Carl Hartness
Nicholas Heleg-Greza
David Holter
Gerald Houlder
Julie Johnson
Craig Peterson
Charles Yiebahn
Jerel Waldron
Doug Walter

PLEASE save me the trouble of calling you and send in those checks! The TAIG OPEN HOUSE is this month so try TRY to be there! A lot will be going on as is the usual custom. I plan to have my amplifier along for some sweet 8BIT-TYPE sound and I'm sure Tom will have his ST and CASIO CZ along! Come and meet some new users and get to know your fellow TAIG members and bring along your excess warez to swap and sell! Get involved! This is usually the biggest month for TAIG! See you all there and Happy New Year!

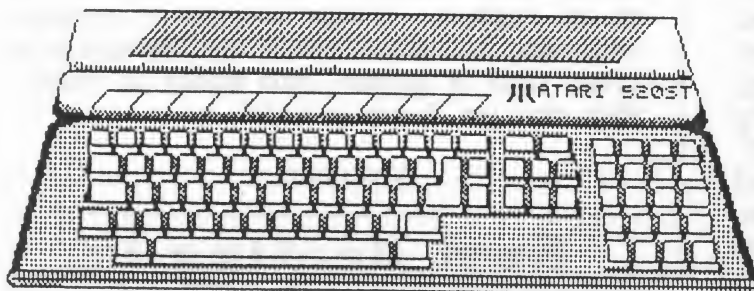
A review of Fleet Street Publisher by MirrorSoft for the ST By Tom Green

How do you go about reviewing something you know very little about? I haven't used any other Desktop Publishing (DTP) programs before so how do I know what is good and bad? I don't know. All I can do is give you my impressions as a first time user.

The documentation is very well done, compared to most that I have seen. They even explain the fundamentals of the operation of the ST (Dragging windows, mouse movement, etc.), there is enough to give the new user enough to start but not too much that the experienced ST user gets bogged having to read information they are already aware of.

Fleet Street comes with 3 disks, the programs are not copy protected, however you need to insert the master disk everytime you boot the program. The master disk has the main program, resource files for both color and monochrome monitors, a font folder, and help files. There is a Desk Accessory on the main disk that allows you to strip control codes out of text files, this comes in handy for those word processor files with all the format and layout codes in them, you would not have to boot a word processor and resave in ASCII mode, just run it through the stripper desk accessory. The Font disk also contains a font folder. The third disk is the Graphics Disk, it contains a folder for the graphics library (containing 145 separate graphic images) which uses the .IMG format. The graphics disk also contains a conversion program that allows you to convert Degas Mono and Color (Uncompressed) pictures, Neochrome pictures and Art Director pictures, into .IMG files. If you have PicSwitch V.7 you should be able to

Continued on next page



What do you think of the newsletter style? Anything you would like to see added or changed? Please give Tom or Cory your opinions on the new style!

TAIG supports both the 8-bit (400 / 800 / 600XL / 800XL / 1200XL / 130XE) computers and the 16 Bit (520ST / 520ST-FM / 1040ST / MEGA 2 ST / MEGA 4 ST) computers. If you need assistance with any of these computers please stop in at a TAIG meeting.

convert most pictures to .IMG format (even 8-bit Koala, Graphic 8, and Graphic 9 pictures).

The manual starts out describing exactly how you go about putting together your first page, and takes you through step by step on loading text files, changing fonts, resizing text windows, loading picture files, editing pictures, etc. By the time you are finished putting the page together you will know enough to put together your own page. At the end of the documentation there are instructions for the operation of the picture converter file, examples of all fonts (Sans Serif, Serif, Helga, Medieval, West End, and College), the Fleet Street Publisher character set, and a complete printout of all the graphic images on the graphic disk.

The manual also does a good job of explaining the different measurement types and printing terms used in the manual. There are sections on how to plan your publication, how to present bad news, advertisements, duplication, the creative use of photocopiers and alot of other information.

All the fonts can be bold, slanted, or both. Any font can be used anywhere in text blocks. You should have a disk with the font folder in it whenever you change fonts, I have had the program go into a loop twice when it kept telling me to insert the font disk even though it was already in the drive. There was no way to get out of the loop and I had to reboot the program. It has never done this when I had the font disk in the drive when I changed fonts. You also need the font disk in if you change magnifications, once you change you can go back and forth without the font disk in the drive. If you have a meg of memory (or more) you could keep the fonts in a ramdisk and you will have alot less disk swapping and 'real drive' access.

The size of your type can be anywhere from 4 point to 216 point, the manual recommends that if you are using a point size different than those on the font disk, that you try to use a point size that is an even multiple of one of the font sizes on disk. You can use one of the five preset page layouts or design your own. You can make and save your own macros for changing fonts or displaying characters

from alternate character sets.

Measurements used can be displayed as points, inches, centimeters, picas, millimeters, % of current point size, relative units of current point size, and absolute units (1/10 point). You can change the status of Text, Pictures, Box rules, Text blocks, Picture blocks and columns guides. You can set each individual Picture / Text / or Box rule block to SNAP (position it self automatically to nearest column guide) or FREE (place it anywhere) or FIX (can no longer be moved (Unless of course you deselect FIX)), each one of these options can be entered separately for the horizontal and vertical direction. Pictures can be rotated by degree, they can be enlarged shrunk, repositioned, cropped, or edited (clumsily).

You can magnify pages anywhere from 12.5% (Full Page) to 200% and there are two preset levels of magnification (100% and Fit window (full page)). Here is a list of menu bar options available and some options that can be set by each:

DESK

About FSP - allows you to set the time and date
Any accessories you have loaded

FILE

Load Text
Merge Text
Save File
Delete File
Save Defined - Used to save a defined area of text to disk
You can save any of the attributes of the defined area

Load Page
Merge Picture
Save Picture - Handy for when you have resized, cropped or otherwise edited an existing .IMG file

Load Keys - Load new macro file
Save Keys - Save current macros
Output - Print to printer, disk, GEM device?
Create Folder - Very handy (Keep your files neat and tidy)
Help - On screen help pages
Quit

Continued on next page

OPTIONS

Magnification

Rulers - Hide/Show select unit of measure

Search - Locate a sequence of characters in a text block. Search for/Match Case/Any Case/ Replace with/Replace Case/Search Direction Type of Search/Replace All/Search Next

New Text - Start a new text only window

New Page

Copy/Move Status-Determine which attributes of a text block will be moved when the text is moved (21 different attributes)

Keys Status - Determine which attributes of a text block will be used for a macro key

Info at Cursor-Select what information you want displayed at the top of the screen you are working in

Printer Controls-Edit the control codes to be sent to your printer. Initialize & line advance code, Bit image mode, Repeat line advance, End line, and End print

Abandon

TYPOGRAPHY

Face, Size, Leading

Justification- Full Out/Left Justified/Right Justified Centered

Spacing - Different attributes for spacing between letters

Indents

One Shot Commands-

Embedded control characters inserted in text blocks at the point where they become effective

Hyphenation

Tabulation

Colour

- Select one of fourteen background patterns

Measure

Underline

Small caps

Unshift Defined-Sets all characters in a defined text area to all lower case

Shift Defined - Same as above except all upper case

LAYOUT

Current Text Block

Box Rule

Picture Block

Page Aids

Page Layout - Size, margins, columns, gutters

Tidy Linked Text

There they are, most selections have several options and almost every aspect of each block is separate.

The program is set up to print on an Epson FX-80 in either draft or final mode, Other Printer, to a .IMG file, or to a GEM device, although the program doesn't support printing to a GEM device (At least when this manual was written it didn't, I'm not sure if there have been upgrades or not). If you don't have an Epson FX-80 you will have to change the control codes that are sent to the printer, this is done from the Printer Options menu. Once you have selected the area to be printed and the type of printer, you are asked if you want it to print in the background, if you answer yes, you can continue working with the program while the printer prints. This does slow down both the printing and whatever you are doing, but is a nice built in option. You can only do this if you have enough memory.

It is hard to say 'exactly' what is good and what is bad about this program, I enjoy working with it, but I don't have anything to compare it to. I do know what I don't like about it, but again these may be features lacking in other DTP programs for the ST also. Some of the things I don't like? The program doesn't have a configuration file to save certain aspects of the program, so if you want a certain option on or off and it doesn't default the way you want it, you are out of luck. Most of my complaints

Continued on next page

about the program relate back to this problem. Everytime I run the program I have to go in and change the printer configuration because I have an Epson RX-80 and the graphics control code is different than the FX-80. The program has bombed twice (in about 25 hours of use, that may not be too bad), both times it bombed while I was manipulating Box Rules, so I know to save before I do too much of that.

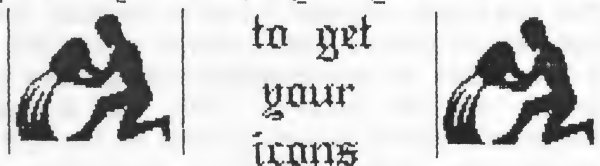
There is no way to load fonts (at least it is not described in the manual and is not a list of options on the menu strip), and that would be a very nice, almost essential feature for any update. The 6 fonts that are included are nice, but I'm sure alot of people would not want to be limited to these.

I have never seen an ad for Fleet Street Publisher, or any info on it at all, so these problems may have been solved by now. I hope to find out when they get my registration card. (Geez, they may even be out of business by now, anyone know anything about MirrorSoft?)

I'm not even sure of the list price. The box I have is marked \$119.95. I guess to sum up, I like the program, however I would hope there is an upgrade to correct some of the problems I have had with it.



Don't forget TAJG has icons for PrintShop on the 8-bit and PrintMaster for the ST. See the DOM librarian



Editors Ramblings

By Tom Green / Cory Johnson

This is the all new layout for the newsletter. It was put together using Fleet Street Publisher on the Atari ST. It is a little easier to do it this way than cutting and

pasting. The graphics are imported .IMG files. Any Degas, or NeoChrome picture can be converted to a .IMG format, so we have many picture files and graphic files that we can use. This months newsletter is one of the largest (in number of pages) that the group has put out in the last two years. This is due in part to the larger typeface used here. We are VERY interested in your thoughts on the newsletter, any input you have whether it is negative or positive is needed.

We are also in need of your articles, the officers and members who are involved in DOM sales, running the BBS etc. have done an outstanding job in the last month to supply us with enough articles to have a nice sized newsletter, thanks everyone. We do need help from the members, we would like to hear from YOU.

Tom and Cory

.Perceptions on the XE Game System
With Many Digressions Covering Just
About Everything Else, Perhaps Even
Addressing the Proverbial Question,
"Is the 8-bit dead, yet?"

By Cory Johnson

There has been quite a lot of hubbub over Atari's decision to release the XE Game System, a lot of misconceptions of what it actually is does and does not do. There has also been some flak aimed at Atari for "abandoning the 8-bits in favor of a game machine." This is the first, and last time I plan to address the subject, until Atari releases the TT, a true 32-bit machine, and subsequently releases the ST game system. What is the XEGS?

The XEGS is simply a redesigned 65XE aimed at the mass market. That's all, nothing else. As simple as that. The XEGS still uses the 6502 microprocessor, and all the familiar chips, the same GTIA graphics chip. What does this mean?

The XEGS is TOTALLY 800/XL/XE compatible with software and hardware. Same cartridge port for the same cartridges, 64K RAM, same SIO port for the same peripherals. The monitor output has changed slightly, but it's still a composite video out. The major internal

Continued on next page

difference is the addition of the Missile Command game which now coexists with BASIC on the motherboard. The external differences are purely aesthetic. The XEGS has a detachable keyboard, round pastel function keys. The keyboard remains the familiar QWERTY layout, although the four major function keys reside upon the game unit itself, while the HELP key is on the keyboard unit. It comes packaged with a joystick, a light gun, and three games: Missile Command, Bug Hunt, and Flight Simulator II. So much for what it is, why is it?

With the release of the first 520ST's about 3 years ago, the 8-bit moved down therungs a bit. It was no longer a "hot" machine in the eyes of the consumer, thus it was no longer Atari's flagship machine. As its popularity with those in the market for their first computer dropped, it's price didn't, at least not as rapidly as it's popularity did. Also, prior to the release of the ST's, Atari had been sold by Warner Communications to Jack Tramiel, former CEO of Commodore (I could probably write for days about that, but not today). Under Warner, Atari had suffered through, and barely survived some major marketing blunders. Sales dwindled, and Atari's future didn't look very bright. In case you hadn't noticed, many of the major retail chains, Sears, K-mart, and others had dropped the Atari line completely. Many consumers began to think that Atari had gone out of business. When Jack Tramiel tried to sell his products to these chains, they were less than enthusiastic, in fact, they were quite cold to the idea of carrying the Atari computers again. But, a few of them continued to carry an item which had been proclaimed dead by the soothsayers of doom and readers of tea leaves, the game machines.

Game machines, you remember the 2600. Blocky graphics, iffy sound, these units continued to sell. Eventually Atari had sold out all of the warehoused units. The 7800 came along, billed the super-game system for the "professional" game player. It played 2600 cartridges, and it's own enhanced graphics cartridges. These sold out. Atari re-designed the 2600 into a sleeker, more stylish case at a better price. These sold out. In a bold marketing move, Atari

redesigned the 8-bit computer, called it a game machine, marketed it towards the "serious" game player, and guess what, these units also sold out. Many of the same retailers who wouldn't carry Atari computers would carry the XEGS. Apparently computers don't sell, game systems do. Bear with me, I'm still working on the why part... The XEGS sells for the same reason the ST's took off. Simply stated it offers value. I can purchase a 65XE for about \$100. The 65XE is Atari's low end 8-bit computer with 64K of RAM and the BASIC programming language. I can purchase a XEGS for about \$150.00. With the same architecture as the 65XE, the same amount of memory, but the XEGS includes a joystick, a light gun, and several games.

Let's break this down... Approximate prices of individual items in the XEGS system.

Standard Joystick.....about \$10

Light Gun W/Bug Hunt...about \$40*

Flight Simulator II....about \$45

Missile Command.....about \$15

(*Bug Hunt and the Light Gun have not yet been released by Atari for individual sale. I just took a stab in the dark. Suggested retail prices vary from the prices I listed, although the prices I've listed tend to be fairly common.) That brings the unit price down to approximately \$40.00. The XEGS has all the computing capabilities of the \$100 65XE computer, for less than half the price. Instead of chastising Atari for abandoning the 8 bit in favor of a game machine, perhaps we should applaud this marketing strategy. Atari has breathed new life into the 8-bit line. More users makes a broader user base which is more attractive to software developers. Also, the rebirth of the cartridge should help to squash the rumors of piracy being worse upon the 8-bits than on comparable computers (I pause for an editorial note, that is pure hogwash, piracy is just as bad on the other machines, we've allowed ourselves to become scapegoats and examples by being apathetic and nickle and diming vendors to death, but that's a totally separate article...), ah, where was I, piracy on comparable computers, cartridges and the like. Cartridges, although more expensive to manufacture, should prove popular with developers who should see a

Continued on next page

marked decline in the amount of illegitimate copies of their programs. The average "Joey D. Pirate" squatting on his haunches in his basement, doesn't have the equipment or expertise to copy a cartridge. The simple fact is that its more time consuming, and much more difficult to duplicate EPROMs than it is to swap a couple of disks inside of a Happy enhanced drive and blow off some copies for 700 of his closest friends. Need another reason for both the end user and the developer to thank Atari? How does a new market for old programs sound? Defender, PacMan, Qix, and all of the older cartridge programs that were taking up warehouse space six months ago have suddenly become a saleable commodity, which is good for everyone involved. The more programs that are sold, the greater the financial incentive to write for the 8-bits. Atari had no obligation to support the 8-bit after being purchased by Jack Tramiel. They've received a lot of top quality excrement from many of us lately. Some of it truly deserved, some of it not. Perhaps we should put our money where our mouths are, and offer some support.

Election Report / By Tom Green

I would just like to remind everyone that elections are coming up in April. We will be discussing the elections at the February meeting and taking nominations at the March meeting and will vote at the April meeting. We just want everyone to start thinking about this now and consider running for one of the offices. We need a president, a vice president, a treasurer, and a secretary.

I am worried that we may not be able to find someone to take over the group. A few people have expressed interest in either treasurer or secretary, but we need someone who wants to lead the group for the next year. Steve and I had some ideas of what we wanted to do when we ran for office and have accomplished most of what we set out to do. I would like to find someone who REALLY wants TAIG to survive and is willing to invest a little time to make this happen. None of the current officers are going to run again, however most of us will still attend the meetings

and I will be offering my services to continue editing the newsletter. I am not sure if Cory or Steve are going to work with the group after leaving office.

I guess to sum up, we NEED you to run for one of the offices. The current officers are willing to help make the transition easy for the new officers. We will take the time to explain the way we have tried to handle the running of the group. Think about it...



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EPSON PRINTER UPGRADES

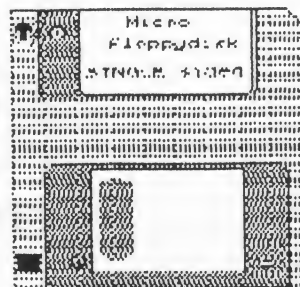
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Another Plea, this one with graphics



Please help out the editors and send in your articles today. I will be forever grateful....
Kathy

Midi Demo at the February meeting. If you have something you would like to demo, let one of the officers know...

OSS Pascal Review By Jeff Gottstein

I am going to review Oss Personal Pascal. I started off using version 1.01. I ordered the upgrade version, 2.0, in early June. I waited and waited until it came in. I did not get the pascal until late August. I was not very happy with Oss after close to 4 months of waiting until it finally came.

When I opened the package I was very impressed by the manual, it looked big,
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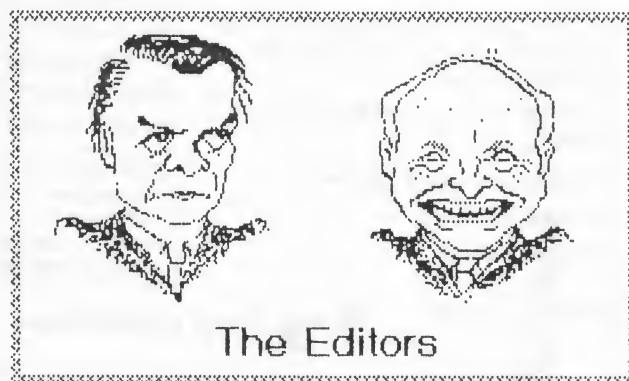
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and full of information. I then booted the computer up, and looked on the two disks that pascal came on. I was familiar with most of the files, because they were used in version 1.01 also. I then loaded in the pascal program. I was also impressed with the way that it look when I booted it up. I could have up to 3 different programs in memory at once, and that is very handy when you want to do cutting and pasting from one program to another.

As I started to play around with it a little I thought that Oss went a little nuts and made too many modifications. I found that they had taken out some of the nice one key commands, but I went on. I then loaded in a program that I had written in version 1.01. Most of the commands worked except one of the most standard commands. It was the read command. In pascal you can either read one whole line in, the command for that is readln, or you can just read one character in, that command is read. It would not just read one character for me, and I used that command a lot.

I started to use some of the other new major commands that makes this pascal very nice. It is very easy to do things with this version of pascal. I would recommend this version to anyone who is thinking about learning pascal. I also would recommend Cooper's "Condensed Pascal" book written by Doug Cooper. Another thing that I can recommend, is that if you are going to order a new version of Oss Personal Pascal, wait until you have heard that they are shipping when you order it, otherwise you could have your money tied up for 4 months, and have no Pascal Program.



The Editors

TAIG Membership Application

New____ Renewal____ Change____

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Address_____

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State____ Zip Code_____ Phone_____

Type of computer_____

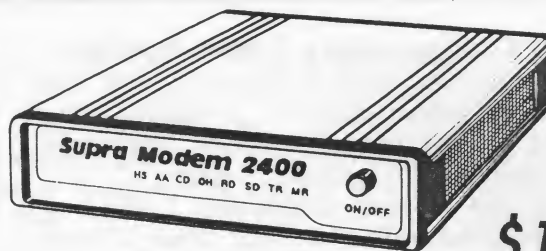
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Next TAIG Meeting :

Sunday January 31st at 7:00 pm at the St. Louis Park Recreation Center, 5005 West 36th Street in St. Louis Park. 1 1/2 miles west of Highway 100 on 36th Street. Hope to see YOU there...

First Class